

HISTORY OF BOXFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY,

OPENED IN 1873.

by

Abbie R. Gage.

1916.

Mr. Augustus E. Bachelder of Boston, whose summer home for many years was in Boxford, and the Pastor of the church, Rev. S.D. Gammell, became interested in having a Public Library for the First Parish. They called a meeting of every one interested, at the church vestry, October 22, 1873. It was well attended and much enthusiasm developed. The meeting was organized by choosing Dea. J.K. Cole Chairman. The following Trustees were chosen.

Mr. A.E. Bachelder, Pres.

Mr. J.S. Sayward, Vice Pres.

Mrs. A.R. Gage, Sec. & Treas.

Rev. S.D. Gammell.

Rev. William S. Coggins.

Dea. J.K. Cole.

Mr. Thomas P. Dorman.

A meeting of the Trustees was held at the Parsonage, October 30, at which By-Laws and Regulations were adopted. The people had decided to have a Library, and officers had been chosen, but there was neither money, books, nor room to contain books. There was only the vision of a Library, but Rev. Mr. Gammell and Mr. Bachelder were at the head, having been chosen a Committee on books and finance at a meeting of the Trustees, held November 6. They proved very efficient.

A subscription paper was passed around, nearly all the families were interested, and contributed generously. Books were at once purchased, and a room hired in Mrs. Samuel Ayers' shop on the second floor. It was a pleasant, sunny room, and answered the purpose very well for several years. Book cases, to be made by Mr. Frank Ayers, were ordered, a stove purchased, and Miss Lizzie Ayers engaged as Librarian. She gave her services for the first year, with the exception of all fines collected; she was then paid \$5 a year. She was followed by Miss Mary Ellen Perley, whose mother was later chosen for one year. The books were all covered. Some of us can remember the pleasant parties at the Parsonage, and our more or less skilful attempts at the coverings. We were all young together then, and there were merry times.

At the end of the first year there were 312 volumes, which all thought a good beginning. In 1875 occurred the death of Mr. Sayward, Vice President. Although he had lived here only a few years, he took great pride in the welfare of the town, being instrumental in forming a Farmers' Club, and in having trees set out around the church and on the streets. He was a great loss to our Library and Parish. Rev. William S. Coggin was chosen Vice President, and Mr. James P. Cleaveland Trustee.

In 1876, a catalogue was prepared by Miss Perley and Rev. Mr. Coggin at a cost of \$13. Copies were sold at 15 cents. In 1877 occurred the death of another of the Trustees, Thomas P. Dorman, the youngest, only about thirty

years of age, a great loss, not only to the Library, but far more to the town, the church, and the Sunday School, of which he was Superintendent. He was an earnest worker in all good causes and was greatly missed. Miss Florence Coggin was chosen Trustee in his place. In 1878, Miss Perley, Librarian, reported 546 volumes in the Library, and in 1879, 561 volumes. That was the last year the little room was used as a Library, and we go on to the history of the new Library.

Prof. George H. Palmer said recently, "During the illness of Mrs. Bacon, who owned the present Library building, my first wife quite often called upon her, to cheer and brighten her days. It occurred to Mrs. Palmer that Mrs. Bacon's house would be a very suitable one for the Library, as large as needed, and centrally located. She spoke of it to me several times, and I told Mr. Gammell that whenever the house was for sale I would assist in its purchase in memory of my wife."

Early in 1880, the house was for sale. Prof. Palmer offered to give \$100 toward its purchase. A meeting of the Library Association was called. All were much pleased. A Committee, consisting of Dea. Cole and James Cleaveland, was chosen to purchase it. Ten days later, the house was bought for \$155, the deed passed and registered. Again money was needed, and Miss Mary Sawyer solicited for subscriptions. The money came quickly and easily.

It was decided to defer any work on the building till spring. On April 27, a meeting of the Trustees was held at the house. Plans were discussed and somewhat formed. Rev. Mr. Coggin, Dea. Cole, and Mr. Cleaveland were chosen Building Committee. Mr. Ayers was engaged to make the repairs. As there was a second floor, with two rooms above and below, quite a change was necessary. Besides taking out all the partitions, the chimney was partly taken down, a hard pine floor laid, and blinds put on. Mr. Alvin French painted and papered the enlarged room.

The work as it went on through the summer days was of great interest to the village people, and to those who came daily to the office for their mail, or passed on the street. It was a great event for our little village. Not only money but work was given for the building; the latter is not recorded, but a few items from an account show that Mr. Gillis made and gave the sign, and that Mr. French painted it and also gave two days' painting. Mr. Ayers gave labor, Daniel Conant and Jerry Rea helped grade the yard, while others gave substantial assistance. The Library was then enclosed by a fence. In due time the building was completed, and its furnishings, new and old, and the books, were put in place.

It seemed best not to hire a Librarian, and gratuitous service was rendered by the ladies a month or more at a time. As Prof. Palmer requested us not to cover the books he gave, none were covered after that time. Entertainments to raise money were held at various times. Asher Palmer gave a lecture, also Rev. Mr. Gammell, and Jefferson K. Cole a reading. A drama netting \$37.60 was given by Mrs. Ayers and others; a spelling match was held at the vestry. Money was given by a Literary Club, and by the Ladies' Society two consecutive years.

That year, 1880, it was voted to become incorporated. Augustus Herrick, our townsman and a lawyer in Boston, offered his services. The affair was of some length as two or three meetings were held before it was accomplished: at the last one, the By-Laws were acted upon, and the same officers chosen. It may be of interest to know that the charter cost \$5. Mr. Herrick and his family were always interested in the Library, and his passing on while comparatively young was a great loss to the Parish. Mrs. Herrick donated some of his books to the Library. The annual meeting was deferred until December, when the following resolution was adopted. "We heartily appreciate the untiring interest, care and labor of the Building Committee, and the gratifying result of their efforts, and extend to them our most sincere thanks for the same."

In 1881, the town voted to give the money received from the dog tax to the two Libraries, West Boxford having followed our good example and established a Library. Our share was \$47, and the town has continued to vote the money to the Libraries ever since, our share for 1915 being \$81.54. This yearly sum is a great help to the Library.

Rev. Mr. Gammell, who had been our pastor for twelve years, was called to Lynn in 1881, and therefore resigned as our Trustee. Both Mr. and Mrs. Gammell were greatly interested in the Library, and the value of his work for it can never be estimated. Rev. William P. Alcott was chosen Trustee in his place and has served thirty five years. He has always been interested and helpful, and his work of great benefit to the Library. Miss Florence Coggin resigned as Trustee, and Miss Mary Sawyer was chosen in her place.

In 1882, it was voted to have the Library open one evening a week for delivery of books, and also as a Reading Room. Lamps and additional chairs were provided, magazines and papers contributed. The Misses Mary and Hattie Cleaveland presented a large number of books. Mr. William Conant had charge of the room. It did not draw the young men as was hoped and was given up after two years. The room for two or more years was used for the Wednesday evening prayer meetings: settees were placed at the right of the door, from front to back.

and a small melodeon brought in. It proved convenient, and meetings were very well attended. There were then no book stacks in the centre, so there was quite a space, though it is hard to realize it now. It was voted to allow the Natural History Society to place a case of their specimens in the Library for public exhibition: later this was donated to the Library and has given pleasure and profit to many.

In 1888, Dea. Cole resigned as Trustee. His health had failed but not his interest in the Library. Rev. R. R. Kendall was chosen in his place. In 1889, Mr. and Mrs. Bachelder and Miss Mary Sawyer were chosen to look over all the books and make such changes as they thought best. They spent much time on the work during two summers, rearranging books, taking out useless ones, and preparing a new Catalogue. Miss Perley solicited funds to pay for it. A vote of thanks was given to the Committee, and also to Miss Perley.

Rev. Mr. Alcott was chosen in 1891 to ask the town to print in its annual report the names and numbers of the books added to the Library the previous year: this has been done since 1892, and is a great convenience. Rev. Mr. Kendall resigned in 1891, and, the next year, Rev. Emery L. Bradford was chosen to fill his place. In 1893, Mrs. Mary T. Herrick was chosen Trustee in place of James Cleaveland, deceased. From the first,

Mr. Cleaveland had taken great interest in the Library and did very much for it; he served twenty years, and was a great loss to the Board.

In 1895, our dear Mr. Coggin passed away from earth, and the next year, Mr. Bachelder was chosen President in his place. Prof. Palmer was chosen Trustee. The following resolutions were adopted.

"We, the Trustees of the Boxford Public Library, at this our first meeting since the death of our honored President, Rev. William S. Coggin, D. D., desire to make some expression of our appreciation of his interest in and labor for the welfare of our Library, and our deep sense of the loss our Board of Trustees has sustained, therefore:

"Resolved, that we desire to hold before ourselves our honored President's example of hearty and steadfast interest in every effort for the public good, and especially his zeal and devotion and wisdom in the founding and development of our Public Library.

"Wise in his counsel, generous in his aid, wide in his sympathies, we recognize, as those who must carry on the work Dr. Coggin so signally helped to begin and establish, that his loss to us as President and Counselor is a loss that cannot be replaced.

"Resolved, that in token of our indebtedness for our late President's counsel and support, and in sympathy for his bereaved family, these resolutions be entered on our records, and a copy sent to Mrs. Coggins."

Prof. Palmer resigned as Trustee in 1902, after serving six years, as some of the citizens of Boxford requested that the town have the privilege of electing one of the Trustees. It was so voted. At the annual town meeting following, Mr. S.W. Howe was chosen. In 1903, Miss Sawyer resigned as she was leaving town. Miss Charlotte Hurlbutt was chosen in her place and served one year. Rev. Mr. Bradford resigned and Rev. L.W. Snell was chosen. The Association passed a vote of hearty and sincere thanks to Miss Sawyer and Rev. Mr. Bradford for their long continued and efficient service to the Library.

In 1904, Prof. Palmer was chosen President in place of Mr. Bachelder, deceased, and still holds the office. The following resolutions were adopted.

"We express our personal bereavement in the loss of him who presided over us in apparent health and in native grace at our annual meeting one short year ago, and also our sympathy with the beloved and honored family of our brother.

"We hereby recognize the long and faithful and self sacrificing service of our recent President, .. a service to which was generously given time, thought, and material aid, .. Mr. Bachelder having been a Trustee from the beginning and President from the organization in 1873 till 1880, and again from 1895 till the present time.

"It may be permitted us also, gratefully to allude to Mr. Bachelder's practical and deep interest in our town and in all that related to its welfare, especially in the prosperity of the church. A beautiful and exemplary and honored life has ended on earth and we can only bow submissively to God, and cry from our hearts... .

'How blest the righteous when he dies!'

"It is directed that these resolutions be placed upon our records, and a copy be sent to the family of our late President."

Miss Emily Palmer was chosen Trustee in place of Mrs. Herrick who resigned. A vote of thanks was given Mrs. Herrick for her interest in and service for the Library during the eleven years she had been a member of the Board of Trustees. Miss Bessie Cleaveland was chosen Trustee.

Rev. Mr. Snell resigned in 1905, and Rev. Walter E. Williams was chosen in his place. As Mr.

S. W. Howe had resigned at the previous annual town meeting, Mr. L. K. Morse was chosen in his place, and still continues to represent the town. Mr. Howe was practical and efficient, and all were sorry to have him resign. A vote of thanks for his services was passed. The interior of the Library was painted and papered, and other improvements made: the Trustees expressed great satisfaction with the appearance of the room. Efforts were made through the Librarian, Miss Bessie Cleaveland, to interest the teachers to make use of the books in the schools. Since that time, more or less use of them has been made, proving of interest and benefit to the pupils. Miss Cleaveland served the Library nine years, and was most helpful and efficient. Her removal from town is a great loss to the Library and Parish.

In 1907, on Miss Sawyer's return to Boxford, she was chosen Trustee, in place of Miss Emily Palmer, deceased. The following resolutions were adopted.

"In view of the death of Miss Emily Palmer within the year, the remaining Trustees adopt these resolutions:

"Since the Heavenly Father has been pleased to call away from earthly activities our sister Trustee, Miss Emily Palmer, we desire to express something of the debt we owe her.

"We would recognize the quiet but very potent influence that Miss Palmer exerted in every sphere of Boxford life. Especially do we express our gratitude for the interest she took in the Library, and the most generous legacy she left us, and we desire to bestow on ourselves something of that benediction she brought to us all by her chastened, unselfish and truly Christlike character."

During the summer of 1908, Miss Mary Sawyer re-classified the books in the Library, arranging them according to the Dewey system.

Prof. Palmer expressed great satisfaction and pleasure in the appearance of the Library, and said, "By far the most valuable gift the Library has ever received is the work of Miss Sawyer in classifying and cataloguing the books."

A special vote of thanks was given her in appreciation of the great work she accomplished and her untiring efforts in behalf of the Library during many years.

In 1909 Rev. W. B. Williams, our Pastor for four years, was called to Bridgewater, and therefore resigned as Trustee. Rev. E. A. Roys was chosen in his place.

Thanks were voted to Madam Lane for her kindness and labor of love in making candy, which was sold at the Library.

It was voted that Miss Sawyer should try to arrange a plan to have books at the Store, hoping to induce the young men to read them.

Also that Miss Bessie Cleaveland should find a place in East Boxford.

Accordingly Branch Libraries were opened at the Store and the Railroad Station and proved a success. Mrs. Perley Killam and Miss Bertha Perley have charge of them. In the annual report of the "Massachusetts Library Association", Boxford is spoken of as having this "unique plan."

In 1910 Miss Julia Cummings offered to replace the old fence with a new one. This offer was accepted with thanks.

Mrs. Annette Manny gave a very interesting and instructive "Travel Talk" at the Chapel for the benefit of the Library.

Mrs. N. W. Howe and Mrs. Atkinson raised the sum of thirty-seven dollars at a Whist Party. Mr. and Mrs. C. D. Palmer gave generously of money and books.

In 1911, as the shelves were filled, it was voted to have a book-stack run through the center of the Library.

It was voted to employ a Librarian, paying twenty-five dollars a year. Miss Bertha Perley was engaged and still continues in office, proving faith-

ful and efficient. Mrs. C. D. Palmer was added to the book Committee.

In 1912, the Library was opened one evening a week for the exchange of books, also as a Reading Room. It was continued for a time, but so few availed themselves of the privilege it was discontinued. Mrs. Susan E. Wilkins gave the Library Association \$100 as a nucleus for a building fund, in memory of her mother, Mrs. Elizabeth W. Killam, who keenly appreciated the advantages of education." A vote of thanks was given Mrs. Wilkins for her generous gift.

In 1913, it was voted that hereafter the successive Pastors of the Congregational Church in this Parish be Ex officio members of this Board of Trustees, such membership to cease, automatically, with their pastorate of the church. As the Pastor, Rev. Mr. Roys, left the pastorate of the church that year, Rev. F. L. Bradford his successor took his place as Trustee.

Rev. Mr. Bradford made a statement that certain volumes, histories, presented years ago to Mr. and Mrs. Coggin by the people of the Parish, were after Mr. Coggin's death, given by Mrs. Coggin to him. Mr. Bradford said he would like to present these

people have appreciated the Library, and have given generously. The Young Ladies' Club, looking toward the future, gave the proceeds of an entertainment to the Building Fund. In the summer of 1915, a whist party was held at Mrs. Mary T. Herrick's, for the benefit of the Library: this pleasant, social affair added a good sum to the funds.

Many books have also been contributed by different people. Prof. and Rector Palmer, at various times, have given books of their own writing. Prof. A. V. G. Allen gave his finely written and inspiring "Life of Phillips Brooks." The ministers of Boxford have ever rendered valuable assistance, in time, thought, and efficient labor, much appreciated by all.

Six legacies have been received, for a fund.

In 1881, \$100 from Mrs. Moses Dorman.

In 1885, \$200 from Miss Augusta Palmer.

In 1895, \$200 from Mr. Charles Herrick, Topsfield.

In 1905, \$300 from Mr. A. E. Bachelder.

In 1906, \$200 from Rev. Mr. Coggin.

In 1907, \$200 from Miss Emily Palmer.

From small beginnings our Library has grown to good dimensions for a country village. It is an educational centre and a source of entertainment. We can but be grateful to those men who planned so well for the present and future citizens of the town.

The Library now contains 3735 volumes.

Additional legacies for
the fund

\$5-00 from Miss Mary Cleaveland

\$100 from Miss Adelaide Allen

1919 - \$200 from Mr. J. H. Cole

Written by request
of
Prof. Palmer.